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SUCCESS STORY

Reconciliation through Dance, Drama and Song



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Eleven teams performed music, dance, and dramas during the Cultural Gala and Dance Competition at Pece Stadium in Gulu.



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Qualifying rounds, like this one in Awach, were held at the sub-county level.

January 2009 – Excitement was in the air at Pece Stadium in northern Uganda. Eleven teams from conflict-affected sub-counties in Gulu and Amuru had performed in the final round of the Cultural Gala and Dance Competition. After spending long hours practicing dance numbers, dramas, and songs, the teams, as well as a crowd of over 2,000, were waiting to see who would be judged the best troupe in the two districts.

The event was spearheaded by the local Gulu District Government, with support from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, to promote peace and provide opportunities to showcase the Acholi culture. Peace has prevailed in the region since 2006, allowing for increasing opportunities to celebrate the local culture through unity and reconciliation activities like music, dance, and drama.

The festivities provided an avenue through which the Acholi could exhibit their culture and way of life. Artistic performance is a way to celebrate cultural revival, and such events help create a sense of normalcy for the people who have returned to their villages. They also promote reconciliation and help build relationships among the various communities that have suffered at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army, which propelled the conflict that plagued northern Uganda for more than 20 years.

Qualifying rounds for the gala's dance, drama, and music competitions were held at the sub-county level, with the winners advancing to the final competition in Gulu town.

More than 55 cultural groups participated in the sub-county competitions, and 11 teams advanced to the final round. The vibrant festivities were attended by sub-county and district officials as well as a Member of Parliament who represents the Gulu District at the national level.

The winning team was presented with oxen and a plow, a valuable prize that will allow the team members to pursue sustainable agricultural production activities in their village.